

Boehlert chose to retire in the year when National Journal, the political world's answer to Sports Illustrated, featured him as the ultimate "Down the Middle" guy. In its Feb. 25 issue, the magazine published its annual ratings, which showed that Boehlert's votes were more liberal than those of 52.2 percent of House members and more conservative than 47.8 percent. Boehlert's district includes the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, and it's hard to move the ball more to the middle of the plate than he does.

It's been downhill for his brand of Republicanism from the moment he set foot in Washington as a congressional staffer in 1964. That's the year Barry Goldwater won the Republican presidential nomination and the great flight of the Republican liberals began.

After Goldwater's landslide defeat, two Republican progressives who later became conservatives, George Gilder and Bruce Chapman, wrote a brilliant book called "The Party That Lost Its Head," detailing how and why the party's liberal wing responded so anemically to the conservative challenge. But it was too late. The party of Abraham Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt was destined to become an annex of the conservative movement.

Boehlert has always been unabashed in embracing his liberal roots. Over breakfast on a sunny summer morning in Cooperstown five years ago, Boehlert embraced two of the most progressive politicians of his lifetime. "People say to me: 'Why are you the kind of Republican you are?'" Because in my formative political years, when I was coming up in New York, my governor was Nelson A. Rockefeller and my senator was Jacob K. Javits."

Why does the decline and fall of liberal Republicanism matter? After all, rationalizing the political system into a more conservative GOP and a more-or-less liberal Democratic Party makes the alternatives clearer to voters, who are offered, in Goldwater's famous phrase, "a choice, not an echo."

But it turns out that a Republican Party dominated by conservatives is no more coherent than the party that left room for progressives. The huge budget deficit is conservatism's Waterloo, testimony to its political failure. The conservatives love to cut taxes but can't square their lust for tax reduction with plausible spending cuts. Oh, yes, a group of House conservatives has a paper plan involving deep program cuts, but other conservatives know that these cuts will not pass, and shouldn't.

Paradoxically, because the liberal Republicans didn't pretend to hate government, they were better at fiscal responsibility. They were willing to match their desired spending levels with the taxes to pay for them. It didn't make for exciting, to-the-barricades politics. It merely produced good government.

Boehlert, being an optimist by nature, was always ready to declare that the "moderates' moment" had finally arrived. Last November, after I had written a column taking some moderate Republicans to task for backing the outrageous budget bill that passed under the cover of darkness at 1:30 a.m., there was Boehlert on the phone insisting that he and fellow moderate Mike Castle (R-Del.) had wrung some important concessions out of the House leadership. Maybe so, I replied, but I had a higher opinion of moderate Republicans and expected more of them than that lousy budget bill.

The problem may be that Boehlert and Castle did get as much as they could, given the numerical weakness of their variety of Republicanism, but that's not good enough. I suspect Boehlert knows this. Absent a robust progressive wing, congressional Republicans

will continue to produce fiscally incoherent government. Democrats now have the task of representing their own brand of politics, and that of progressive Republicans, too.

I'll miss Boehlert and his optimistic moderation. Our politics worked better when a sufficiently large band of Republican moderates and liberals could take the edge off polarization and orient government toward problem-solving. But the liberal Republicans are gone. We have to deal with the GOP we have, not the GOP we wish still existed.

TRIBUTE TO GREEK INDEPENDENCE DAY

HON. CHRIS VAN HOLLEN

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 28, 2006

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate the 185th anniversary of Greek independence and to celebrate the long friendship shared between the people of Greece and the United States of America.

Greece and the United States are forever linked by common values and political philosophy. In the formative years of our Republic, the founding fathers looked to the shining example set by ancient Greece whose political institutions and democratic ideals were the foundation upon which were based many of the political freedoms and traditions Americans enjoy today.

In 1821, as our American experiment with democracy blossomed, we proudly stood in support of the new Greek republic emerging from the ashes of the Ottoman Empire. Petros Mavromichalis, a founder of the modern Greek state, said to the citizens of the United States in 1821, "it is in your land that liberty has fixed her abode and . . . in imitating you, we shall imitate our ancestors and be thought worthy of them if we succeed in resembling you." As the Greek state took shape, Presidents Adams, Madison and Jefferson joined a nation of grateful Americans in an expression of encouragement and good wishes. Ever since, Greece and the United States have enjoyed a strong cultural, commercial and strategic partnership.

The Greek people have stood with us during every major American military action. The citizens of the United States will never forget how during World War II, Greece in the historic Battle of Crete, presented the Axis powers with their first major setback, setting in motion a chain of events that would significantly affect the outcome of World War II.

And today the Greek people are standing beside us still, this time in Afghanistan where they have not only dedicated financial and logistical support to the NATO effort there, they are also playing an important role in helping to physically secure the country.

Thomas Jefferson referred to ancient Greece as the light which led ourselves out of Gothic darkness. On the occasion of the 185th anniversary of Greek independence, I join all Americans in wishing the people of Greece congratulations and best wishes. We will remain eternally grateful to the Greek people and the legacy of ancient Greece for the shining example it set for democracies the world over.

TRIBUTE TO GREEK INDEPENDENCE DAY

HON. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 28, 2006

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I am honored today to rise in commemoration of the 186th anniversary of Greece's independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1829 and to pay tribute to its long and sometimes difficult journey back to democracy, freedom, stability, and prosperity.

Nestled in Southern Europe, and bordering the Aegean Sea, Ionian Sea, and the Mediterranean Sea, between Albania and Turkey, Greece is the epitome of picturesque.

Greece is rich with history traceable to Stone Age hunters, compounded with agricultural and complex civilizations of Minoan and Mycenaean kings and followed by the Dark Ages, marking a period of wars and invasions.

During the second half of the 19th century and first half of the 20th century, Greece strengthened its landmass by adding neighboring islands and territories.

After being invaded by Italy in 1940, Greece became occupied by Germany from 1941 to 1944. After enduring many years of civil war, Greece defeated the communist rebels in 1949 and subsequently joined NATO in 1952.

In 1972, Greece held its first democratic elections and created a parliamentary republic, abolishing the monarchy, and later joined the European Community in 1982.

Today, Greece is part of the international coalition committed to the war on terror. By making airspace and airbases available to the U.S., Greece is an important player in the war against terrorism.

I join my colleagues in commemoration of Greece Independence Day and gladly pay tribute to the many cultural contributions paid by Greek Americans in Dallas, as well as, in our Nation.

CELEBRATING THE 185TH ANNI- VERSARY OF GREEK INDEPEND- ENCE ON MARCH 25, 2006

HON. HILDA L. SOLIS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 28, 2006

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the 185th anniversary of Greek independence, which took place on March 25, 2006.

Thousands of years ago the spirit of democracy was born in Greece. In 1821, this democracy flourished when the Greeks successfully declared their independence from the Ottoman Empire. Their struggle and success reinforced their belief in freedom and democracy. This belief holds strong and true today, as Greeks continue to fight side-by-side in defense of democracy and freedom, and in opposition to terrorism.

Today we celebrate Greece and the Greek people everywhere for their continued contribution to democracy and freedom. As nations around the world struggle with tyranny and injustice, may they look to the victories of the Greeks for hope that democracy can flourish.